ABSTRACT

The concept of “Joy” (悦乐) in the Analects has its significance revealed at the very beginning section of the book itself, when the Master exclaimed, “Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application? Is it not delightful to have friends coming from distant quarters? Is he not a man of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?” Deeper inquiries into the interconnected meanings among the abovementioned three segments of Analects 1.1 revealed that Joy is the omnipresent emotion being portrayed in the concerned scenarios. On this basis, the paper proceeds to examine the nature of Joy as experienced by Confucius in the Analects.

This paper will argue that Joy in the Analects is a form of self-attained gratification that is experienced by the individual regardless of the life circumstances encountered. That is to say, just as the individual experienced Joy in the pleasing environment, he also attained the exact kind of emotional well-being in face of arduous situations. Hence, the question of how this self-attained Joy is achieved is brought to light and will be put to discussion. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that the experience of Joy even amidst poverty and hardship relied on the individual’s practice of self-cultivation which rendered them the ease of complying with the Heaven’s ordinance.